Annotated Text Set Assignment

Adaptation

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EDU1100

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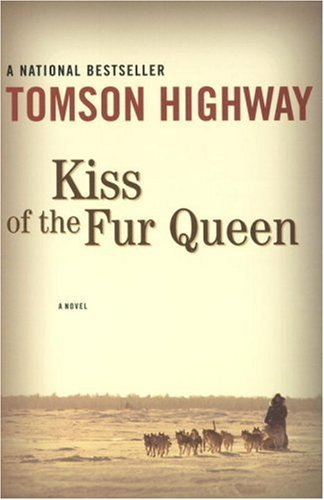
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The theme I have chosen for the text set assignment is adaptation. Adaptation can refer to many things, but the definition of the word remains the same, in that adaptation means the act of changing oneself to suit a new environment or purpose. I think adaptation is particularly significant to teenagers – they are at a crucial development stage in their lives, facing many changes (physical, emotional, social, familial, etc.). Teenagers must adapt from childhood to adulthood, which is no easy task. I believe that what they are learning in school should reflect the process of extreme change that these adolescents are undergoing. For this reason, I believe adaptation should be the theme upon which texts should be chosen. Adaptation can refer to the personal journey of the main character (to which teenagers can relate), the transformation of a book or play into another medium (such as film), or the general state of the world (as I think we live in a time of great change, especially surrounding technology). The ten texts I have chosen to support this theme cover a wide variety of adaptations as mentioned above. In order for students to maximize their full potential to learn, the theme of adaptation allows them to compare their own life experiences to the subject matter. By reflecting in a meta-cognitive way upon their own lives and relating it to text, teenagers will take away a greater understanding of the material and engage with it in a deeper and more meaningful way. Furthermore, by allowing students the opportunity to read books they can relate to, the likelihood of them enjoying reading and improving their literacy skills increases. These reasons are why I believe adaptation should be the new theme upon which texts are chosen.

Text #1: Annie John by Jamaica Kincaid (1985)

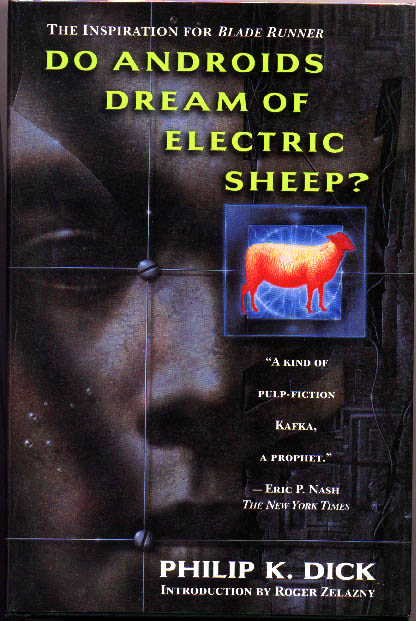
Summary: Annie John is a fictional story about a young girl growing up in Antigua. The story highlights the relationship between Annie and her mother, and how their relationship changes over the years – from Annie’s obsession with her mother to their ultimate and inevitable growing apart when Annie grows up. Eventually Annie “leaves the nest” and realizes her mother is human just like everybody else.

Rationale: Annie John truly represents the theme of adaptation since it is a coming of age story, chronicling Annie’s development from a young girl to a young adult, and delves deep into the hardships and changes Annie must undergo in her transition to adulthood. This book is also an ideal way to discuss controversial issues such as depression, sexual identity, and racism, which are issues teenagers face on their own journey to adulthood, thereby allowing teens to sympathize with, identify, and understand the story. For those reasons, this book is an ideal way to integrate difficult to teach or “controversial issues” in the classroom while maintaining the theme of adaptation. Furthermore, Annie John is a great way to represent the “unheard voice,” or under-represented perspective, since the main character is an Afro Caribbean girl growing up in a colonized society. This book weighs in extensively on the effects of colonization and how the impact of the British Empire has affected the “natives” or non-whites both in the Caribbean and abroad. The cultural background of the protagonist would make this book an ideal selection for new immigrants, especially in Caribbean communities, as they can compare their own journey of cultural adaptation (from the motherland to a new country) to the similar journey Annie faces (moving from Antigua to England).

Text #2: Kiss of the Fur Queen by Thomson Highway (1998)

Summary: Kiss of the Fur Queen is a fictional story (based on true events in the author’s life) about two Cree brothers, Champion and Ooneemeetoo Okimasis, who are taken away from their family and sent to a residential school. At the school, the boys face several atrocities, including the stripping away of their culture and sexual abuse at the hands of the Catholic priests in charge of the school. The story follows the boys’ upbringing and chronicles how their childhood experiences have impacted their lives as adults.

Rationale: Kiss of the Fur Queen is a controversial choice, since it discusses issues of sexual abuse and homosexuality, however I believe this book is a must read and suits the theme of adaptation quite fittingly. The two protagonists in the book undergo severe hardships that they must endure – although their lives are drastically altered by things others have done to them, they must find a way to adapt, carry on, and survive. Kiss of the Fur Queen is a story by a Native author who truly understands the abuse and cultural erosion Aboriginals have faced at the hands of the Catholic Church and the Canadian government, which is an integral part of Canada’s history that is often ignored or misunderstood. For this reason, this book is an excellent way to teach cross curricular content (History, Politics) while representing the unheard voice. Since the exclusion of Aboriginals in Canadian consciousness is something that still needs to be addressed, the story opens the door to further issues of adaptation – in this case, how does a culture that has been broken heal itself, and how should the Canadian government adapt their policies to handle Aboriginal issues in an equitable way?

Text #3: Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep? by Philip K. Dick (1968)

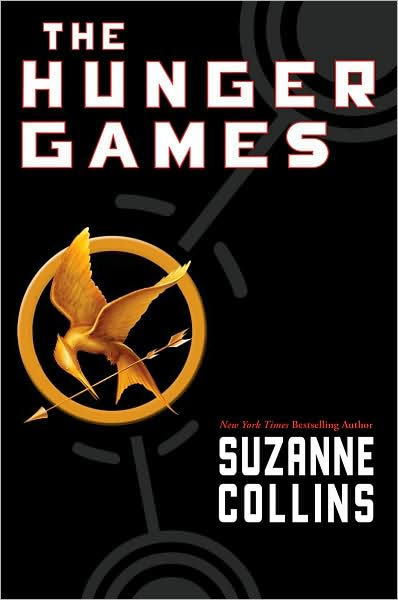
Summary: Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep? is a science fiction story about a futuristic, post apocalyptic society that has been ravaged by nuclear disaster and war. The protagonist, Rick Deckard, is a bounty hunter who is faced with the task of finding escaped rogue androids (sub-human robots) and “retiring” them. On his quest to find the androids, he questions what it means to be truly human, and what really separates human beings from androids.

Rationale: I think this book embodies the theme of adaptation in that it examines closely and analyzes human nature and human action. Humans have already adapted to living in a post-apocalyptic society, where nuclear fallout, pollution, and extinction of animals are part of this new age. Humans have adapted to create robots to make their lives easier – including robotic animals and androids. However this book shows that humans, although they may adapt to their physical surroundings, possess the static quality of human nature and empathy. When Deckard discovers that the androids themselves have adapted to possess qualities inherent in human nature, he questions what it truly means to be human. Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep? is an ideal representation of adaptation of human life and human nature. Furthermore, the fact that *Blade Runner* (a film based on Dick’s book) is an adaptation of the text makes this book even more relevant to young readers who may benefit from a screen adaptation of the story, or respond more positively to a science fiction film versus a science fiction text.

Text #4: *Blade Runner* directed by Ridley Scott (1982)

Summary: *Blade Runner* is based on the science fiction novel Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep? by Philip K. Dick. The film follows the story of Rick Deckard (played by Harrison Ford), a bounty hunter living in the post apocalyptic United States who is assigned to “retiring” replicants – pseudo human robots. The replicants, banned from the Earth, were developed to work as slaves and labourers to humans in distant off-world colonies. Deckard, a semi-retired bounty hunter, agrees take on a final assignment in hunting down a group of replicants.

Rationale: *Blade Runner* is an ideal form of adaptation to study – it is a big screen adaptation of the novel Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep? by Philip K. Dick. The movie follows several of the same themes as the novel – human nature, the quest for belonging, post apocalyptic and futuristic worlds – and includes a few of its own, including loneliness, the meaning of life and love, and slavery. Since the film is a loose adaptation of the novel, it is an ideal text for students to study, in that they can analyze differences between the two versions. Since *Blade Runner* is a movie, it caters to multiple intelligences and learning styles (oral, spatial, musical) and facilitates students who may not necessarily be strong readers. The film is also a tie in with the media strand of the curriculum, as students have the opportunity to analyze film, its various facets, and how it relates to the written word. *Blade Runner* is also a good example of teaching genre – it is based on a science fiction text, however the film itself was made in the film noir style, and includes aspects of detective fiction.

Text #5: The Hunger Games by Suzanne Collins (2008)

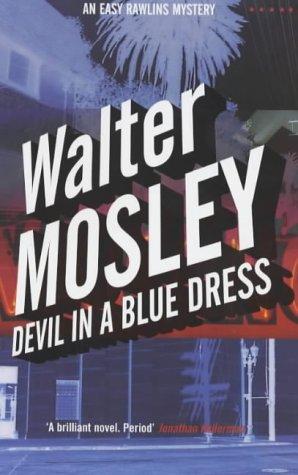
Summary: The Hunger Games is a science fiction/action/drama set in a post apocalyptic society known as Panem. The protagonist, Katniss Everdeen, is a teenage girl with a knack for hunting who is drawn into competing in the deadliest event in Panem, known as the Hunger Games. The games are hosted every year by the Capitol, and each year there is only one surviving contestant. Katniss and schoolmate Peeta Mellark must both compete in the games, and as their desire to survive increases, their relationship also intensifies.

Rationale: The Hunger Games is a relatively new text that is quite popular right now with teenagers. Teens can relate to the main characters in the book as they are the same age and endure the same issues that Katniss and Peeta face – namely the confusion of attraction, love, disappointment, and deceit. The book is also an ideal example of adaptation, in that both Katniss and Peeta must face circumstances beyond their control (being recruited to compete in the games) and must adapt to survive (literally). With everyone in Panem watching, since the games are televised, Katniss and Peeta must concoct a love story between themselves to win the hearts and minds of the viewers. Amongst the pressure to stay alive, Katniss and Peeta sort out their confused feelings for one another, all while adapting to their surroundings in the arena and adapting their image as star-crossed lovers to appeal to the viewers for survival. The Hunger Games is an ideal choice to excite students about reading and to thoroughly explain the theme of adaptation.

Text #6: *The Hunger Games* directed by Gary Ross (2012)

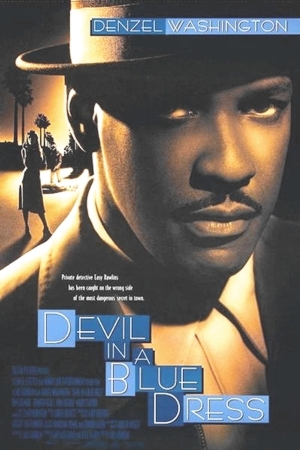
Summary: *The Hunger Games* is a science fiction/action/drama based on the novel of the same name by Suzanne Collins. The story is set in a futuristic, post-apocalyptic society and surrounds the life of Katniss Everdeen – a teenage girl who volunteers herself for the deadliest game in all of Panem (the Hunger Games). Katniss and schoolmate Peeta Mellark are recruited from their district to compete for in the games for survival. As the competition and desire for survival intensifies, so does the relationship between Katniss and Peeta.

Rationale: *The Hunger Games* is an ideal representation of adaptation since the film is based on the novel. This will allow students the opportunity to compare the two versions in a way that is differentiated and catered towards learners with strong preferences to oral, spatial, and musical intelligences. The film is also a brand new selection – still in theatres – therefore field trips for movie screenings can be planned, and it provides the ideal opportunity for students to also study media hype surrounding the film. For example, further adaptations such as music videos, songs, and even map making exercises exist online and are quite accessible to both students and teachers. These additional adaptations also make studying *The Hunger Games* an ideal cross-curricular text (Music, Drama, Geography, etc.). The film also parallels Phillip K. Dick’s Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep? and *Blade Runner*, therefore a comparative study of *The Hunger Games* (the film and the novel) is another way adaptation may be studied.

Text #7: Devil in a Blue Dress by Walter Mosley (1990)

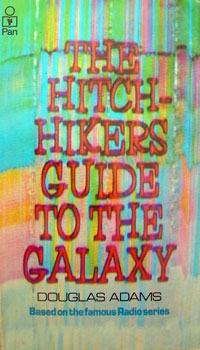
Summary: Devil in a Blue Dress is a hardboiled detective fiction that features Ezekiel “Easy” Rawlins, an out of work, blue collar, African American man living in Los Angeles during the late 1940s. Easy is down on his luck, and meets a wealthy white stranger who asks him to track down a young woman. Easy agrees, but finds out tracking down the girl is more work than he bargained for.

Rationale: Devil in a Blue Dress is an engaging mystery that embodies the theme of adaptation in a variety of ways. Firstly, Easy is lured into being a detective since he is out of work – he has no previous experience in the field, but knows his neighbourhood well, possesses street sense, and is well connected within the community. Easy uses these qualities to adapt himself to the role of the detective. The second way adaptation is shown is through Daphne Monet, the girl Easy must find. Daphne is an anomaly – she is white, young, and attractive, however she spends her time frequenting African American bars in a rough part of town. Daphne is a chameleon and she adapts whenever she needs to escape. Her true identity is a mystery that Easy does not initially set out to solve, but inevitably does so when he gets too deep into the stranger’s request to find the missing girl. Devil in a Blue Dress is an ideal text to address controversial issues of racism, sexuality, violence, and abuse, and offers the perspective of the unheard voice in Easy, a lower class African American man living in the highly segregated United States during the 1940s. This book also offers teachers an opportunity to address cross curricular subject matter such as American History.

Text #8: *Devil in a Blue Dress* directed by Carl Franklin (1995)

Summary: *Devil in a Blue Dress* is based on the novel of the same name by Walter Mosley. It is filmed in the neo-noir style and stars Denzel Washington as Ezekiel “Easy” Rawlins, an African American man living in 1948 in Los Angeles, who has been unjustly laid off from his job due to his race. Easy takes on the task of finding a missing girl, Daphne Monet, to pay his mortgage so he can keep his house. Easy is a greenhorn and has no experience as a detective, but finds he can learn fairly quickly along the way, despite the many challenges blocking his path.

Rationale: *Devil in a Blue Dress* the film, like the book, also examines controversial issues and embodies the same theme of adaptation. Easy undergoes the transformation of being an unemployed factory worker to a private investigator, and Daphne reveals her various adaptations of identity throughout the winding course of the mystery. *Devil in a Blue Dress* is an adaptation of the novel itself, thereby offering students an opportunity to compare the two versions and assess what makes the film a successful or unsuccessful adaptation of the written text. The film also offers students the opportunity to experience the story in a way that is differentiated for oral, spatial, and musical learners. Furthermore, by studying a film noir adaptation of a written text, students can compare this film to Blade Runner, which is also a film noir adaptation of a written text. Both of these films compared together also add context and opportunity for students to examine the media strand of the curriculum.

Text #9: The Hitchhikers Guide to the Galaxy by Douglas Adams (1979)

Summary: The Hitchhikers Guide to the Galaxy is a comedy/science fiction story surrounding the life of Arthur Dent, a man who’s house is about to be bulldozed to make room for a major highway that is going to be built. As Arthur struggles to protect his house, an alien race begins to destroy the Earth to make room for their own hyper space bypass. Arthur hitches a ride on one of the aliens’ spacecraft, and discovers there is much more to life outside of the Earth than he ever imagined.

Rationale: The Hitchhikers Guide to the Galaxy is an ideal representation of adaptation for many reasons. Firstly, the story surrounds the destruction of the Earth; in order to escape, Arthur and his friend must adapt to the situation to escape the planet alive. Also, once they have finally escaped, they must alter their concept of what the Earth really was, who controls the universe, and why things happen the way that they do. The characters struggle to adapt to the concept of the absurd and if things really happen for a greater, more meaningful purpose. For this reason, the text is also a coming of age story geared towards younger readers like teens, in that it can help to explain the conflicting emotions adolescents may feel during their development to adulthood. The Hitchhikers Guide to the Galaxy also exemplifies adaptation due to its many forms; the text originally started as a radio show on the BBC, but has been adapted into in audio book recordings, a television show, a stage show, a comic book, a Hollywood movie, and a series of five novels. Comparing each of these forms of narrative is an ideal way to teach students about form, style, and media.

Text #10: *The Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy* directed by Garth Jennings (2005)

Summary: *The Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy* is a comedy/science fiction film that surrounds the life of Arthur Dent (Martin Freeman), a thirty-something man who always “plays it safe” in life. Arthur’s house is about to be destroyed to make room for a highway when aliens (known as the Vogons) destroy the Earth. Arthur and his friend Ford Prefect (Mos Def) escape on a Vogon ship and use a book (The Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy) to stay alive once they drift off into space. By chance, Arthur and Ford hitch a ride with Arthur’s former love interest, Tricia “Trillian” McMillan (Zooey Deschanel), Zaphod Beeblebrox (the President of the Galaxy, played by Sam Rockwell), and Marvin the Paranoid Android. Together, the group must try to survive and find the meaning to life, all while Arthur learns how to take risks and fall in love.

Rationale: *The Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy* is an ideal way for students to study the theme of adaptation. Students can study the novel version of the story as well as the film version, and can sort out the differences between the two texts (such as the love story between Arthur and Trillian). Other adaptations of the story can also be brought in for additional context (comic, radio show, audio book, television series, etc.). The film also offers students the opportunity to examine the story in a way that caters to spatial, oral, and musical learners. Furthermore, since this story comes in so many adaptations, it makes it an ideal text to study with applied, modified applied, and vocational level learners.